Letter from Africa: Timothy R.B. Johnson’s legacy

“People enter our lives and leave without making any impression but Tim has made such an impeccable impression on the hearts and souls of every one he met in Ghana and West Africa.”

Tim is a man of many parts, an astute academician, a great teacher, a good listener and a mentor to all. Tim’s interest in improving maternal health has led him to travel to the country from the United States of America to give lectures, conduct ward rounds and give tutorials to many trainees. Success and greatness to Tim means that even one single life matters and therefore Tim is compassionate with the total elimination of maternal death.

Tim was influential in getting his departments in Johns Hopkins and Michigan to provide clinical attachment and placements for Ghanaian medical students and residents. He showed a great deal of interest in the career development of the students and during the many social events that he introduced us to, we met friendly people with common ideas who later developed interest and passion for Ghana. His interest in individuals does not end after qualification as specialists but continues all through the different phases of our careers. Tim demonstrated extreme willingness in the career advancement of any of us who approached him. It is therefore not surprising that many of his students became heads of departments, Deans of our Medical Schools, Provosts of College of Health Sciences, and Chairmen of the West African College of Surgeons.

Tim was justly honoured as a Fellow of the West African College of Surgeons and the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons because of his great contribution to medical students and postgraduate education in Ghana and the West African College of Surgeons. As an external examiner in the West African College of Surgeons, Tim studied our examination pattern and carefully suggested changes in our examination format to suit both the examiners and the trainee doctors. These changes that he made over fifteen years ago still stand and students have to satisfy a minimum cut-off in the theory examination papers before appearing for the clinical examinations.
Professor Tim Johnson was full of ideas and suggestions when the Family Health Hospital started about 15 years ago. He continued to give encouragement till the Family Health Hospital added the Family Health Medical School. The agility and passion given by Tim to the beginning of this new private medical school lifted our spirits to strive hard to establish the Family Health Medical School. Tim made us understand a lot about the set-up of American universities especially the Medical schools in Michigan and Johns Hopkins. It is therefore not surprising that Family Health Medical School is springing up in Ghana to simulate Johns Hopkins medical school which also started as a private Institution.

In the light of these major contributions made by Professor Tim Johnson to the training of Post graduates and undergraduate medical students in Ghana and the sub-region and being the mentor to establish the Family Health Hospital and Family Health Medical School, it is very appropriate to have the library at Family Health Medical School, the first private Medical School in the sub-region, named after him as the Tim Johnson Library Complex.

— Colleagues and friends in Ghana